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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5344
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RUCNARF/ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
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RUCNNSG/NUCLEAR SUPPLIERS GROUP IMMEDIATE
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL IMMEDIATE
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA IMMEDIATE 3242
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE 2468
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW IMMEDIATE 2979
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE 6557
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL IMMEDIATE 7060
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RUEHKS/AMCONSUL SAPPORO IMMEDIATE 6356
RUEKJCS/CJCS WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
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SUBJECT: HIGH HOPES IN JAPAN FOR OBAMA,S NUCLEAR-FREE WORLD

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Classified By: JAMES P. ZUMWALT, CHARGE D'AFFAIRES, A.I.; REASONS 1.4 (b) AND (d)

1. (C) Summary: Every year on the occasion of the August 6 and 9 anniversaries of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombings, Japanese media give extensive coverage to the anti-nuclear weapons movement and suffering of radiation victims. This year's coverage, however, differed markedly from that of previous years, with ubiquitous, positive references to President Obama in commemorative addresses, newspaper articles, "ban-the-bomb" gatherings, and talk-show commentary. Many groups and individuals who previously denounced U.S. security policies have reversed their positions in favor of praise for the President's Prague speech. Japan's anti-nuclear weapons movement has effectively adopted the President as a symbolic leader, and many have called on him to visit Hiroshima and Nagasaki. GOJ officials, meanwhile, have downplayed the likelihood of such a visit in the near term but suggest that the door is open to a future visit. The issue has been further complicated by Japanese insecurity following the DPRK's recent nuclear test and missile launches, leading to a strange ambivalence -- a

reinvigorated anti-nuclear weapons movement running parallel to, and at times even intersecting with, calls for the U.S. to reaffirm Japan's place under its nuclear umbrella. END
SUMMARY

Dramatic Change in Tone by Hiroshima Mayor, Media

12. (C) U.S.-focused rhetoric at this year's anniversary events for the WWII atomic bombings has seen a conspicuous change in tone compared to previous years. In the past, the mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, journalists, and other public figures have used the bombing anniversaries to criticize U.S. policies. For example, in his 2008 speech commemorating the Hiroshima bombing anniversary, Mayor Tadatoshi Akiba noted, "170 countries voted in favor of Japan's U.N. resolution calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons. Only three countries, the U.S. among them, opposed this resolution." By contrast, Akiba's remarks this year centered on the President, referring to those who support the President and seek the elimination of nuclear weapons as the world's "Obamajority." Akiba ended his speech with an appeal in English to the world and the President: "We have the power. We have the responsibility. We are the Obamajority. Together, we can abolish nuclear weapons. Yes, we can." The 2008 U.S. presidential campaign catch-phrase "Yes we can" also figured prominently in media coverage of Akiba's speech. For example, the Mainichi Shinbun headline, above a photo of a Hiroshima survivor joining her hands in prayer, read: "We can abolish nuclear weapons. Yes we can." Although Prime

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Minister Aso shared the podium with Akiba, it was President Obama's speech in Prague that has captured the Japanese public's imagination.

13. (C) Following President Obama's acknowledgment that the United States' status as the only country to have used nuclear weapons gives it a "moral responsibility" to work for their reduction, Japan's anti-nuclear movement has sought to leverage the President's Prague speech in support of its cause. Many Japanese understand the political risks involved in the President's speech and therefore believe in the feasibility of achieving real progress towards the elimination of nuclear weapons. Past years' criticism makes the widespread, effusive praise of President Obama this year all the more striking. Support for the President is not confined to traditional elites or interest groups and has expanded to the public at large. One survivor said, "We survivors have called for world peace and total elimination of nuclear weapons for such a long time, but I'd never found any sign of hope for realizing it until I heard President Obama's remarks."

A Presidential Visit to Hiroshima?

14. (C) Many groups and private citizens have called for the President to visit Hiroshima or Nagasaki as part of any visit to Japan, with the hope of strengthening his resolve on nuclear disarmament. Notably, these invitations to Hiroshima and Nagasaki have not included calls for an American apology for the bombings. One editorial, however, proposed a reciprocal arrangement in which the President would visit Hiroshima after the Japanese Prime Minister visits Pearl Harbor. In an attempt to moderate public expectations, Foreign Minister Nakasone released a statement saying, "I feel expectations are too high about that. This is not a matter we plan to ask the President but a matter about which the President himself should give thought."

The Japanese Government's Role

15. (C) Many editorials have also expressed the need for a more active GOJ in eliminating nuclear weapons. In this view, Japan bears a special responsibility as the only country to have sustained an atomic attack. One editorial cited this special status and the recent election of a Japanese national (Ambassador Yukiya Amano) as the next International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General as reasons for Japan to take the initiative. Another editorial, alluding to fears that the United States will downgrade

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relations with Japan in favor of an America-China G2 framework, suggested that Japan form a separate "G2" with the U.S. to eliminate nuclear weapons, develop peaceful nuclear power, and stop global warming. Other commentators supported Mayors for Peace, an organization of 3000 mayors from around the world chaired by Hiroshima Mayor Akiba, which aims to propose the elimination of nuclear weapons by 2020 at next year's Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty review conference.

16. (C) Nuclear issues have also entered into the August 30 election campaign. At the Hiroshima memorial ceremony, Prime Minister Aso described the "earnest desire" of all Japanese to rid the world of nuclear weapons, but he added that the realities of the geopolitical situation necessitate Japan's security alliance with the U.S. and use of its nuclear umbrella. On the other hand, opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) leader Yukio Hatoyama, while stating that "realizing a nuclear-free world is Japan's moral mission," has appeared to change positions. First he raised the possibility of revising Japan's three non-nuclear principles (no possession, production, or introduction of nuclear weapons in Japan). Following protests by smaller opposition parties that could form a ruling coalition with the DPJ, he reversed course and proposed codifying the three principles into law. Both the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the DPJ are trying to walk a fine line, because while most Japanese support the movement to ban nuclear weapons, neither party wants to appear weak on security.

Nuclear Reductions or Nuclear Umbrella?

17. (C) The issue has been further complicated by Japanese insecurity following the DPRK's recent nuclear test and missile launches, leading to a strange ambivalence -- a reinvigorated anti-nuclear weapons movement running parallel to, and at times even intersecting with, calls for the U.S. to reaffirm Japan's place under its nuclear umbrella. This dichotomy is evident not just among politicians, but also among scholars and journalists. Articles have applauded the President's goal of a nuclear weapon-free world yet also suggested that Japan can only defend itself against the DPRK and China if the United States possesses a nuclear deterrent.

Most media seem to call for the long-term goal of eliminating nuclear weapons from behind the immediate safety of a deterrent shield.

ZUMWALT